

# Column: No easy solution for child-care conundrum<sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Last month, while on her post-budget press tour, Premier Christy Clark announced a \$76-million child-care funding plan that the BC Liberals plan to roll out over the next three years, should they win this spring's provincial election.

The funding would include \$32 million to create new child-care spaces, \$37 million to improve the quality of early years services and \$7 million to strengthen and co-ordinate early childhood development programs.

Critics say the Liberals' plan will barely scratch the surface of fixing the issue of unaffordable child care in this province.

With the critique comes the renewed call for universal child care for a flat fee of \$10 per day, similar to Quebec's much-revered child-care program.

Clark's announcement was the kind of pre-election-season promise we've heard a time or two before in this province, and one that, frankly, a few years ago I would have pretty much completely ignored.

But a lot has changed for me in the past few years - namely, my husband and I became parents and, more recently, one of thousands of B.C. families that rely on using child-care services so we can both work.

We were fortunate enough to find a full-time spot for our daughter, who was not quite a year old when she started at day care. In many communities, spots for young infants in licensed facilities require a lengthy wait. In the prenatal class my husband and I took before our daughter's birth, there were several parents who already had their unborn children on day-care waiting lists.

It's been two months since my return to work, and I'm willing to admit I have a love-hate relationship with our day-care arrangement.

I love that we were able to find a day-care program that places a strong emphasis on learning, with Early Childhood Education-trained caregivers.

I hate that it sits at the expensive end of the price scale, and that we are paying more for child care than we do for rent.

I love that our daughter's caregivers light up with genuine adoration when they see her, and that she feels comfortable, secure and happy in their care.

I hate that, at least once a day, my mommy instincts kick me in the gut with a pang of guilt for leaving my daughter eight hours a day, five days a week.

I love that she comes home from 'school' each week with something new to proudly share with us - a new facial expression, hand gesture, dance or 'word.'

I hate that she comes home each week with a new virus, which she also shares with us.

Not a day goes by that I don't second-guess our decision for me to return to work.

I'm extremely proud of my career and the work I do - I'm even quite fond of the people I work with - but returning to work and placing our child in day care has been an extremely difficult, expensive and stressful transition.

Would a \$10-a-day government-subsidized program solve all of our child-care woes? No, not really.

But it would ease some of the financial burden we are facing and perhaps allow us to explore some alternatives. As would the option of taking extended parental leave or working flexible or part-time hours upon returning to the workforce, which are other valid ideas that should be included in the discussion of this critical topic.

Making the decision to place a child of any age into someone else's care is never easy - and neither is making the decision to leave a career you enjoy and have worked hard to establish.

Parenting comes with enough stress and worry as it is. While there is no quick fix for B.C.'s child-care quandary, long-term solutions that address affordability and accessibility for all families would be a tremendous help in making child-care decisions a little less stressful.

-reprinted from Peace Arch News

**Region:** British Columbia<sup>[2]</sup>

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